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Developing a mission for further education: changing culture using non-financial and intangible value

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ABSTRACT

In his keynote lecture at the Reimagining Further Education conference in Birmingham in June 2016, Sir Frank McLoughlin was clear that the sector 'needed a mission' to unite around, and to let people know where it is going (McLoughlin 2016). This was endorsed by the attendees, who felt that it would enable the sector to regain ownership of what it stands for nationally, regionally and locally. Such a vision is needed to create a Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector that is targeted to develop an effective shared culture in the further education sector, close skills shortages and skills gaps in education, enhance community cohesion and improve productivity. This vision needs to have a robust measure of impact that aligns with the vision. One possibility is to explore a non-financial and intangible value metric where social value is aligned to the sector mission. A robust measure will enable key stakeholders to agree on areas of focus in a specific geographical location or a specific time. Such a measure might challenge the need for the existence of regulatory bodies such as Ofsted in the way they operate now. With such a robust measure of social value/impact, Government will not need to issue a white paper every time a response to a localised issue is required. We suggest that the Social Earnings Ratio (S/E or SE Ratio) is such a robust measure. For example, if the need in a certain locality is to address skills gaps/shortages or to focus on community cohesion, all that is needed is a change in the weighting of the various components of such a measure. This will allow development of a further education mission that can be utilised nationally, regionally and locally. In this article, we develop this idea and provide an illustration of how the SE Ratio could be applied to a further education college. The example we use is that of a small further education college with an annual budget of £12 m. We demonstrate, using SE Ratio, that this college produces an intangible value of approximately £40 m per annum. Such an approach will enable further education to become the strong owner of its mission and vision in the future, and allow it to develop its own culture and expertise to the maximum of its potential.

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Introduction

There are 359 colleges in England (AOC 2017); all are regulated through the Funding Agencies and Ofsted for their further education (FE) and training work. Colleges that offer higher-level courses are also regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency, Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and their accrediting bodies/institution.

The FE sector suffers from a set of complex and fundamental challenges as detailed in the Foster Review back in 2005 (Foster 2005). These centre around two areas:

- the mission of the sector and its purpose for existence (Campbell 1989, 3–9; Campbell and Yeung 1990; Peeke 1994);
- what metrics can and should be used to judge the FE sector's impact? (Carter, Day, and Klein 1995; Johnson 2006, 48–71; Palmer and O'Neill 2003, 254–274; Ying 2013, 008).

Naturally, these two problems are related to one another in more than one way, but they are not the same and do not emanate from one fundamental source. This is because clarity of mission, or otherwise, is a matter for society, Government, the FE sector and the community to agree upon. In view of this lack of consensus, one way forward might be to identify societal needs, debate the most effective means of meeting those needs and then articulate a mission for the sector (Peeke 1994; Whetstone 2005, 367–378). Naturally there is a difference in mission between the FE sector before and after incorporation in 1993. Almost all colleges had missions after incorporation but not all necessarily reflected the purposes for their existence.

There is no current agreement on the mission for the FE sector (Foster 2005). Colleges set their own missions and change them at will, usually with the arrival of a new principal; some do not even have one (Campbell and Yeung 1990; Peeke 1994; Smith et al. 2001, 75–96). Everybody in society, policy-makers included, assumes that what they think by way of mission for FE is an agreed mission, but this notion has never been tested (Campbell 1989, 3–9; Campbell and Yeung 1990; Foster 2005). It is important to note that whatever policy-makers believe the mission of the sector might be, it is largely not shared by the FE sector.

The Government both assumes and changes the mission for the sector as the need arises without referring to the sector or any other obvious stakeholder (Alexiadou 2001, 412–435; Allen 2015; R36–R43; Avis 1999, 245–264; Higham and Yeomans 2011, 217–230). This is typically communicated through a new minister's speech following a ministerial reshuffle when a new incoming minister articulates his/her view on what FE is or is not about; this can sometimes change in five to six months. For example, Matthew Hancock MP, the then skills minister, announced that all 16-year-olds without a grade A*–C in maths and/or English will have to continue to study those subjects. What is potentially more problematic is the assumption that this is well articulated and acknowledged. In fact, this is

one of the most fundamental questions for society – what is the purpose of the FE sector (Foster 2005)? Ewart Keep powerfully argues that the ever-changing FE policy is seen as simply tweaking the skills supply. Policy-makers fail to recognise the broader mission of FE and also fail in their attempt at balancing the responsibilities of employers with those of FE (Keep 2006, 47–64).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the potential of an alternative metric to quantify the impact and effectiveness of the FE sector (Boocock 2014, 351–371, 2013, 309–325; Harvey 2005, 263–276), a complex and challenging endeavour. It requires significant research into impact measures and relevant metrics, transferable across sectors, repeatable, consistent and meaningful to those who work within FE and the stakeholders who ‘use’ FE (Berg, Lune, and Lune 2004; Biesta 2015; Costello 2009, 131–146; Graham 2009, 549–576).

The literature suggests a possible range of factors required for such a metric. It needs to offer a dependable measure of how FE impacts individuals, communities, business, the economy, crime levels, reoffending levels, mental health issues in the community, citizenship, progression into employment, progression into HE, social mobility, meeting Government agendas on the economy and employment, skills shortages and gaps in the economy, economic activity, economic competitiveness and productivity, to name just a few (Carter, Day, and Klein 1995; Crabbe 2016; Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015; Ying 2013, 008). The Government needs a dependable metric to enable it to decide on levels of funding and how to use the FE sector to impact wider aspects of society as well as the economy (Foster 2005).

Policy context

In our view, the Government has no viable means of measuring what it actually wants from the sector. There are a number of proxies that are used by the regulatory agencies such as Ofsted and the funding bodies (Burnell 2016, 1–11). These centre on sets of judgements on how good or otherwise the quality of teaching and learning, outcomes for learners (success on courses), leadership and management, and financial health. However, it is our view that these proxies do not offer a robust measure of the real impact of FE. The current proxies are used for many reasons, some of which have a historic context in that they related to policy initiatives at the time of incorporation such as the monitoring of 24% growth target between 1993 and 1997. Other reasons, in our view, include the absence of clarity of mission, as this normally drives the assessment of impact, as well as the perceived difficulty, by policy-makers, in directly assessing impact (Ehren and Dijkstra 2014; Zarb 2013). The current funding methodology fails to encourage the sector to impact learners and or the community to move forward and for the economy to thrive (Wolf 2004, 315–333). This reflects a deeper policy failure as the funding methodology represents the Government’s means to implement policy in the FE context (Wolf 2011; Wolf, Jenkins, and Vignoles 2006, 535–565).

The current negative discourse around the success or otherwise of the FE sector suggests that the current proxies are not ideal either to reflect the impact of the work of the sector or to meet societal needs. It is clear, for example, that the current proxies do not represent what the Government needs and wants. For example, when ministers rate the FE sector in the public domain, they never challenge the sector on delivering a set number of courses/qualifications, or on their Ofsted inspection outcomes. In addition, the level of spend from their grants to generate surpluses is seen as a success, while in fact it is an indicator that the college is not spending on learners what it should be spending. These proxies are on the other hand used by the regulatory agencies as though these agencies have different goals from those of policy-makers. This, in our view, suggests that there is dissonance between policy-makers and the regulatory agencies. Indeed, ministers invariably quote statistics from the Confederation of British Industry, UKCES (UK Commission for Employment and Skills) on skills gaps/shortages and use it to criticise FE for not closing these skills gaps/shortages, despite the fact that colleges have never actually been tasked with closing the skills gap or shortages. Furthermore, it is not in the current regulatory mix for any of the regulation agencies to assess the local or regional skills gap or shortage before they inspect a college. For example, it is not inconceivable that Ofsted could use the skills gap/shortage in a certain locality or region as part of the evidence base for making a judgement about the relevance of a specific college; after all, the skills gap/shortage data is publicly available and regularly updated. Equally importantly, there needs to be a core curriculum offering at FE colleges that does not change based on funding. This will give stability to the FE sector and clarity of identity, and enable users of college to know what to expect more than is currently possible.

The measures that are currently employed, by the various regulatory bodies, to quantify the effectiveness of individual colleges rely on proxies that do not deliver for key stakeholders. For example, student success is a proxy for a student being skilful in carrying out a certain task and being of value to future employers (Burnell 2016, 1–11; Leslie 2003, 329–347). The number of students achieving a certain qualification is a proxy for closing skills gaps and shortages. The fact that skills gaps continue and that employers report that college graduates do not possess the required skills, even though they had attained relevant qualifications, leads us to suggest that there might be a better way to measure the impact (Higham and Yeomans 2011, 217–230).

There is a potential non-financial and intangible metric called the SE Ratio (www.seratio.com), which is worth exploring in this context (Ta'eed 2014). It is a reliable, transferable and fast measure that might offer a way out for all stakeholders.

FE system failure

The current state of UK FE points to a major system failure beyond funding cuts, Area Based Reviews, loss of control of destiny and new measures of success (Keep

2015b, 464–475). It is our contention that the sector is just as complicit as the Government in finding itself in this mess.

When one finds that the FE Minister talks about FE system failure and HMCI (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector) proposing that 16–18-year-olds should stay at school, contradicting his agency's own evidence, one can see why there is system failure (Rt Hon Boles 2015; Wilshaw 2015). It is interesting that HMCI's impartiality is not called into question, and the minister finds it possible to remain in his post, in contrast to the fate that the Director General of the British Chamber of Commerce met upon sharing his views about Brexit (Pickard 2016).

Culture and FE

In order to develop a mission for FE, one needs a culture change within the sector. But does FE have a sectoral culture? We would argue that managerialism, although widespread in FE, is not a culture that we should be measuring in this context. A study in 2007 concluded that 'evidence suggests that there is no integrated pattern of shared beliefs or behaviours that can claim to be a distinct entity. External factors are more likely to determine the situated social practices that exist within colleges.' (Anderson 2007). The situation has changed little since then, with great variation between individual colleges. That is not to say that cultures of learning, as distinct for a sectoral culture, have not changed. One example is the 'Open Futures' concept of enquiry- and skills- based learning, originally developed for primary schools, but found to be very effective in the vocational and skills environment of FE colleges (Crabbe et al. 2015).

Where do we go from here?

The system failure is partly evident from the constant stream of policy changes and ministerial reminders that FE is not doing its job. So, for example, the process of Area Based Reviews indicates in part that FE colleges need to be reconfigured (Spours, Hodgson, and Smith 2016). The proposed introduction of Institutes of Technology reflects another aspect of failure, as there is nothing that prevents colleges and universities creating technology centres themselves. The lack of a shared culture is not just in one quarter; it is in FE college's leadership failure to lead on the agenda on skills, productivity and closing skills/shortages gaps; in the AOC on enabling such leadership discourse to take place; in Government Policy in not acknowledging that past failures of the system are partly about policy framework failure; and in Ofsted for failing to measure what matters most to the nation (Elliott 2015, 308–322; Higham and Yeomans 2011, 217–230; Perriton and Singh 2016; Petrie and CRADLE Seminar Series 2015; Wilshaw 2015). On the point of Ofsted, we acknowledge that some Ofsted Her Majesty's Inspectors in the FE and Skills sector are among the most passionate about quality and improvement and also acknowledge their professionalism and aptitude (Burnell 2016, 1–11; Dennis

2011, 119–125). Our difficulty is understanding how one could acknowledge the impact of a Common Inspection Framework, which has enabled the judgement of 82% of colleges to be good or better (Wilshaw 2015) while allowing the skills gap/shortage in the economy to remain largely the same since the 1980s. This begs the question: could Ofsted be measuring the wrong thing (Burnell 2016, 1–11)? Is Ofsted attempting to measure the immeasurable? Or is the Common Inspection Framework not fit for purpose? Realistic closing of the skills gap/shortage will involve both FE colleges and employers, and the apprenticeship levy may be helpful here. Ofsted could play an important role in helping the development of such partnerships between colleges and employers.

Developing a relevant measure

The benefits of developing such a relevant measure are multi-faceted (O'Shea and Lorenzi 2015, 361–371). The following sections attempt to initiate thoughts on what these benefits might be. When considering the benefits of such a measure, it is best to think of these benefits in two distinct categories, the first being direct benefits through the use of the measure, and the second being the indirect benefit reaped from developing such a measure. We will first deal with indirect benefits.

Indirect benefits

The most important indirect benefit of our proposal that colleges use the SE Ratio is that it will become a catalyst for initiating debate on the mission for the sector (Biesta 2015). The importance of a mission that is acknowledged and agreed by all stakeholders is of immense importance for the FE sector and also for the stakeholders (Foster 2005).

The importance for the sector emanates from its ability to articulate its role and to work to deliver a mission that is unambiguous, is not politicised and gives staff in the sector a sense of value (Broad 2016, 143–160; Kuczera, Field, and Windisch 2016, 12). The importance for stakeholders emanates from creating a clear alignment between funders, users, societal pressure groups and the FE sector (Biesta 2015). For example, local Councils are normally concerned with local people being trained to attain local jobs and in attracting inward investment (Hildreth and Bailey 2013, 233–249). This requires an articulated strategy for attracting business to invest and to understand their skills needs (Murphy and Topel 2016; S99–S127). Clarifying the mission will enable a local Council, and indeed the Local Enterprise Partnership, to have clear dialogue with its local college on which industries it is aiming to attract to the local area for growth, what level of skills are required and at what quantum (Keep 2015a). This dialogue rarely takes place currently, and yet it is simple to implement and easy to deliver. Thus, a college could be putting on courses that directly meet the needs of employers, thus enabling local people to be trained for local jobs.

The discourse on mission will, in part, initiate the discussion on how to measure impact, that is to say the ability to measure how effective the sector is in delivering its mission (Bevan and Hood 2006, 517–538). The other key aspect is its ability to directly transfer mission into strategy, and the strategy into measureable working practice (Paul 1990, 31–38; Schuller and others 2004). Our approach will minimise the danger that professionals can confuse activity with impact and so start measuring simplistic activities such as numbers of participants in an activity as a proxy for impacting that work on a locality.

Direct benefits

The most tangible benefit would be the radical change to the way colleges are structured and run. Developing a metric that measures a college's impact will mean that colleges will be structured to deliver what is measured (Bevan and Hood 2006, 517–538).

An FE college will start focusing its activity on raising their non-financial metric (e.g. the SE Ratio; see below), which will potentially have a direct impact on closing skills shortages, prosperity, wealth creation, well-being, social mobility, community cohesion, reoffending rates and other such important aspects to society (Bathmaker 2014; Morris 2015).

Such an approach will enable colleges to align their work to a clearly understood metric or set of metrics by:

- aligning their strategies to these newly created metrics;
- align staff recruitment to these newly created metrics;
- align staff training to these newly created metrics;
- align learning resources procurement and development to these newly created metrics; and
- align capital investment to the needs of their local stakeholders

The alignment of strategy is critical to cultural development and to mission development (Babnik et al. 2014, 612–627; Frigo 2003, 8). This is because strategies map the direction of travel for the future of an organisation, but staff do not normally engage with strategies and see them as the domain of senior managers. The irony is that senior staff and governors create strategies for their staff to implement, so engagement is critical for success (Campbell 1989, 3–9).

Strategic alignment will enable a re-articulation of staff recruitment mechanisms, what skills are required and how staff are selected and promoted (Fernández-Aráoz, Groysberg, and Nohria 2009, 74–84). Current recruitment and promotion are based on qualifications and a set of proxy measures such as a graded lesson observation, which is a proxy for good teaching, learning and assessment. The need is to recruit people based on skills, expertise and attitude. This is difficult, as it is not possible to assess people's attitude to something during the selection process (Shuls and Maranto 2014, 239–252; Young, Rinehart, and

Place 1989, 329–336). Creating a robust metric would enable a more robust and more aligned way of recruiting. This is because it is relatively straightforward to create staff recruitment processes that assess prior outcomes according to a non-financial and intangible impact measure, i.e. requiring a potential recruit to demonstrate to a selection panel how they plan to meet the requirements of the metric or to share their track record in this measure (Shuls and Maranto 2014, 239–252). So, for example, if a lack of self-esteem and lack of aspirations are of high priority, the selection panel could look for that in a recruit, potentially through asking teachers on what they think they will do, or what they have done in the past, to raise aspirations, confidence and self-esteem. This broader and more sophisticated mission is much more useful to the community, the economy and all other stakeholders.

Another important impact is the alignment of resource and capital spend. This is currently estimated at over £2bn a year, assessed against a set of proxies and seemingly governed by whim. For example, a college built a green and renewable technology centre at a cost of £5.5 m, only to find that there was no training need in the sector. The irony is that the grants came from the Government and the European Union, and the college was praised by the then Business Secretary for being ‘visionary’. Another example, in the same region, cost the taxpayer £7.5 m and closed within 24 months, citing a poor choice of location, despite it being clear that it was poorly set up, and local politics was to blame. Such blunders should not happen if there was a robust and dependable resource planning that is linked to a meaningful measure of impact (O’Shea and Lorenzi 2015, 361–371).

Other impact measures

Other impact measures that have potential exist; one example is Social Return on Investment (SROI), which is promoted by the Government to quantify social care impact (Millar and Hall 2013, 923–941). It is an effective measure, but its major drawback is the resource requirement and the time it takes to perform the measure. That makes SROI more accessible to well-resourced, rich organisations (Nicholls 2007; Zimmermann and Stevens 2006, 315–327). SE Ratio by comparison uses existing data that make it low cost and resource light. SE Ratio only takes a few seconds to perform, hence its potential attraction in this context.

A common, trusted platform

These newly created metrics would give all key stakeholders a common platform to agree what colleges are about, what they are not about, and where they are going, nationally, regionally and locally. This would provide insight into how every college enables its local economy to be invigorated and could focus the activity of a college on key needs, for example by targeting certain key industries that are critical for the local economy, e.g. Agrifood, engineering, teaching, care for the

elderly, social work, pharmaceuticals; by improving civic participation; and by helping integrate former prisoners into the community through skills, literacy and numeracy education in prisons, increasing employability and so reducing reoffending.

These metrics could enable funding to be linked to appropriate outputs. So, for example, rather than link funding to qualifications, funding might be linked to aspirations or self-esteem or confidence or a whole host of outcomes, part of which might be qualifications.

S/E ratio value and its application to FE

The social earnings ratio (S/E) is a metric that can be used to measure the impact of FE. It enables the measuring nontangible value. S/E can be considered along the continuum of measures such as the price/earnings ratio (P/E), which is used by the private corporate sector to measure commercial value. It can be considered as a currency for non-financial values (Ta'eed 2014). There is evidence in the literature that non-tangible value is important when making decisions, for example on purchases (Tatum et al. 2016). SE Ratio is a disruptive metric based on international general accounting principles converting sentiment into financial value.

In its simplest terms:

$$S/E = \text{social value/diverted earnings} = \text{social value/corporate social responsibility (CSR) spend.}$$

Social value includes elements of sustainability impact, social impact, people impact, citizenship impact.

The S/E is a corollary to the P/E, a single number index of financial value accepted on stock markets globally (Nicholson 1960, 43–45).

When considering the application of the SE Ratio metric to FE, one needs to consider its applicability in the context of it being meaningful to key stakeholders (see Figure 2). 'Meaningful' here involves a few key considerations, the first that it is of value to users. That is to say, the measure indicates a value addition to the work of one or more of the key stakeholders. This is in contrast to existing impact measures such as Ofsted's measure of 'good', which claims to measure effectiveness. Meaningfulness could take many meanings, in the main linked to specific stakeholder groupings (see Figure 2). The stakeholder groupings are more likely to be aligned in their meaningfulness if time is invested in an inclusive project to agree mission. It is not anticipated that the alignment of stakeholders is simple to achieve, but such work will open different levels of sophistication in how well colleges deal with their stakeholders and their relative power of influence on policy, e.g. adding value, sector staff identifying with it and other measures for success. Interestingly, the Government recently consulted on new set of measures of success (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2015).

The relevance of the SE Ratio emanates from a few key perspectives. These centre on its transferability across sectors, which enables cross-sector comparisons

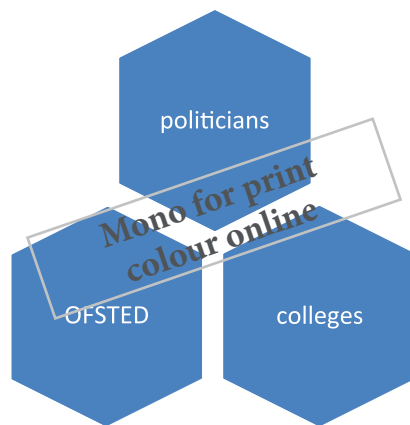


Figure 1. Relationships in the policy domain politicians Ofsted colleges.

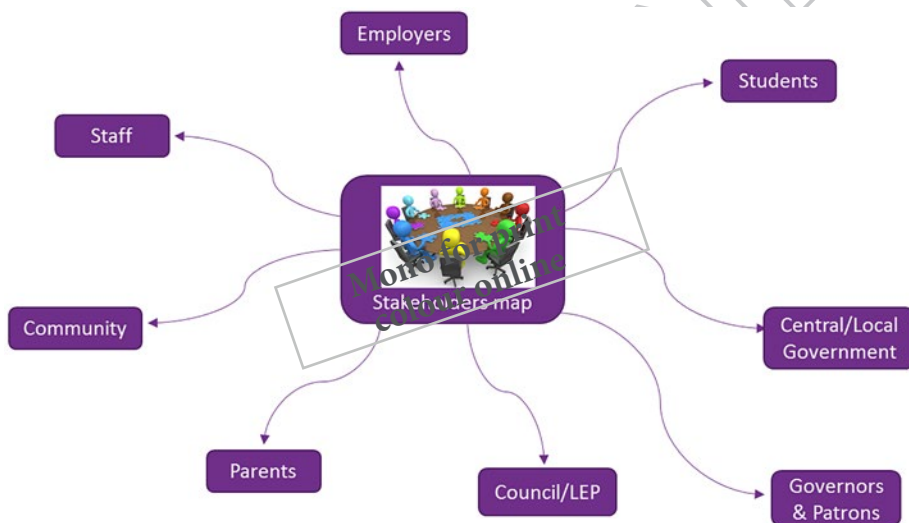


Figure 2. Stakeholder map.

to be performed, and the use of existing data, which the sector already collects, some of which are in the public domain, for example employer views (Statistical data-set – FE choices: performance indicators¹). An added benefit here is that it would enable the sector to offer a higher level of sophistication in using its data, e.g. the use of learner views as part of the SE Ratio measure. It is instantaneous; the calculation can be performed in seconds and easily kept up to date. The measure is affected instantaneously by factors such as a successful bid to build a new facility or a large group of employers or community groups using a college for a specific purpose. This fast response indicates that the measure is sensitive enough to pick up nuances that may be important to certain segments of the stakeholder group. For example, a significant change in learner or employer attitude will be reflected

in the SE Ratio measure much like the fluctuation of PERatio for a manufacturing company (Nicholson 1960, 43–45).

Adaptation of the measure

The work on adapting the measure has two strands; one is to look at what matters the most to the sector in the absence of an agreed mission, and the other is to consider what data are available in the sector that can be used to enable such metrics to be meaningful.

What matters the most to the sector is to be effective in achieving and being seen as achieving all or some of the following (Foster 2005; Green, Preston, and Sabates 2003):

- enabling learners to progress to work and/or higher study at further or higher education;
- closing skills shortages in their localities;
- contributing directly to business growth and prosperity;
- contributing directly and tangibly;
- improving community cohesion;
- reducing reoffending;
- improving the independence of young people with profound and multiple disabilities;
- empowering people to deal with mental illness and similar debilitating conditions.

There are other, more subtle, aspects such as dealing with rurality if a college is in a rural location, or inner city issues if it is located in an inner city. For the purposes of a preliminary study, we have focused on the most important aspects of a college's work, which reflect three distinct views of a college. These 'views' are employer view, standpoint learner view and staff view.

The best way to understand 'view' in this context is to think of it as the use of data that reflect the perspective of staff, students or employers. These 'views' were selected as data were already available; other 'views', as discussed later in this paper, are important and need to be developed as part of a future study.

Justification

We have developed a pilot to test the applicability of SE Ratio to the FE context. For this purpose, it was important to apply the measure to matters of key strategic importance to the FE sector and satisfying two criteria; that the measures affect the FE sector's key stakeholders in a direct and meaningful way and that data are available to enable the measure to be performed instantaneously. The above 'views' fulfil these criteria.

Equally importantly, the three aforementioned stakeholders (see Figure 2) represent a significant cross-section of the stakeholder map, so, by implication, if SE Ratio works for these, it may work well for the rest of the stakeholder map.

The third important reason for this choice is that data are already collected for this set of stakeholders. The rest of the stakeholder map requires further work to capture their views in a systematic, cost-effective and robust way.

Explanation of the 'views'

Employer

This data set is collected by the Skills Funding Agency (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency>) on behalf of BIS (Department of Business Innovation and Skills) and latterly on behalf of DfE Department for Education²) as part of the FE choices: performance indicators. It is annually collected formally with employers with whom a provider (in this case an FE college) works to deliver training completing the survey anonymously within a nationally managed specified time window. As the survey does not give a detailed breakdown of the numbers of positive, neutral and negative responses, we have opted to count all the non-positive responses as negative. The purpose of this is to give the reader confidence in that the SE Ratio when applied to employer views is giving a worst-case scenario. It might also be suggested that a neutral response reflects low expectation, which is not a place where one wishes to position FE.

Student

The students' view is utilised here, as it represents the largest group of stakeholders who are directly affected currently, as users, and in the future, as their participation impacts their future prospects. The student (learner) view also offers a higher level of sophistication in using student satisfaction data in a variety of ways. One can, for example, use a combined measure of satisfaction in the sentiment analysis. We have opted to use the response to the question whether the student would recommend the college to a friend. The assumption here is that a student would only recommend the college to a friend if it met the following criteria:

- the college has benefitted the learner in progressing further in their learning (Spours et al. 2009, 431–446);
- the learner felt welcome and part of a community (sense of belonging) (Strayhorn 2012);
- the learner believes that their friends are likely to reap distinct benefits from attending this college.

This approach offers a level of sophistication for colleges when using student satisfaction data, which goes beyond plotting a few graphs, and offers a commentary

on whether the data is better, the same or worse than the previous year. The use of student satisfaction data enables colleges that are serious about the student experience and how to make student views central to decision-making. This may be developed further by electing to combine more than one question to enable a specific matter to be addressed, for example focusing on community cohesion or being job-ready and so on.

Staff

The views of staff, in the sector, are valuable for conducting sentiment analysis in more than one way. Staff are the heart of the FE system; they are the people who impact learners, community and business in profound ways every day. Their views form an important and critical 'view' of the sector and how sustainable and confident it is at any point in time. These satisfaction rates are not normally collected nationally, but groups of colleges that recognise the importance of staff collect their staff views and participate voluntarily in various schemes to benchmark themselves with other colleges in the sector. Staff views relate directly to individual staff members' identification with the mission of their institutions and whether there is alignment between the rhetoric and the reality of the day-to-day work. This, in the future, would enable a higher-order level of interaction between staff and managers (Hill 2000, 67–75). For the purpose of this study, we have chosen the level of staff satisfaction as part of the sentiment analysis element of the SE Ratio metric, which offers a further degree of sophistication by electing to use an individual question or a combination of two or more questions to represent a specific nuance to sentiment analysis. An example of that is feeling empowered, or having the right skills to do a good job or feeling proud in enabling students to succeed and so on.

Quantifying CSR

The quantifying of the CSR (Matten and Moon 2005, 323–337) to enable the application of the SE Ratio metric to the FE college sector presents a few challenges, centred around three main areas:

- Colleges do not routinely publish their CSR.
- Most colleges do not have a central register or centralised process for managing and offering CSR.
- Different colleges have very different offerings in the CSR arena. These reflect historic aspects as well as locality needs. Examples might include: one seaside college arranges for its students to clean the local beach one weekend per department per year, which helps their students develop their sense of community and for local residents to connect with the youth of the town. Another college, in the year that preceded the Olympics in 2012,

volunteered its students to visit every primary school in their town to help young pupils to engage with the Olympics and sport in general.

To enable this work to be quantified, we sought to audit the work that the college did, which could be classed as part of its CSR. A proforma was devised for managers to complete and return. We then devised a way to quantify the cost of the work and equated that with the CSR college contribution. This was done by working out the cost of a teacher day (teacher day cost = annual salary / number of days worked in a year). The measure for sentiment analysis shows how publically available data from various social media channels can be used in the analysis. This is a best estimate in testing the applicability of the SE Ratio measure to colleges. We feel that as the SE Ratio measure potentially grows in adoption, colleges would develop more robust methods in quantifying and promoting their CSR work.

Original Data:

Employer Satisfaction Data:

Student Satisfaction Data:

Staff Satisfaction Data:

Quantifying CSR:

Quantifying CSR to enable the application of the SE Ratio metric to the FE college sector presents some challenges, centred around three main areas:

- Colleges do not routinely publish their CSR work
- Most colleges do not have a central register or centralised process for managing and offering CSR work
- Different colleges have very diverse offerings in the CSR arena, as has been mentioned earlier in this paper.

To enable this work to be quantified, the authors sought to audit the work that the college did that could be classed as part of its CSR. A proforma was devised to collect CSR work in a uniform manner. It was sent to managers to complete and return. The authors then devised a way to quantify the cost of the work and equated that with the CSR college contribution. This was done by working out the cost of a teacher day (teacher day cost = annual salary / number of days worked in a year).

This is an appropriate estimate in testing the applicability of the SE Ratio measure to colleges. It is anticipated that as the SE Ratio measure grows in adoption, colleges will develop more robust methods in quantifying and promoting their CSR work.

‘Views’ data

Table 1 shows the application of the employer ‘view’ data to SE Ratio. The other data sets, namely, perceptions of students and staff, are available upon request from the authors.

Table 1. Employer ‘view’ applied to SE ratio metric.

AQ35

Sentiment (employer response to question): 'How would you rate the benefits of the training/assessment to your organisation?'			
			Input data
Positive sentiment	Positive*	#	37
	Neutral*	#	0
	Negative*	#	15
	Total	#	52
	Pos/Total	%	71.2%
			Outputs
SER	Ratio		92.95
SI by calculation	£m		24.17
Added social value	£m		23.91
Increase in market Cap/NAV	%		107.88%

*Calculated from the Employer Survey response.

Table 2. SE Ratio pilot data applied to a college.

View	SE ratio (%)	Added intangible social value (£m)
Sentiment analysis	38	9.7
Employer view	93	23.9
Student* view	120	31
Staff* view	121	31

*Data collected as part of the college’s annual staff and students satisfaction surveys.

Methodology

The aforementioned data were fed into the SE Ratio spreadsheet together with audited financial data relating to the same financial year from which the data were collected.

5 As the spreadsheet is designed to take sentiment analysis data from one source, it is replicated as tabs to allow for data to be input for the students, staff and employers views. The resulting SE Ratio percentage and the additional intangible social values resulting from the data are in the next section, Table 2.

Pilot data

10 Table 2 shows the application of SE Ratio to experimental data from a college to the employer, student and staff ‘views’. The employer view data use data collected annually by the education and skills funding agency in England and is available in the public domain. Staff views data are collected by an FE college as part of a voluntary scheme shared between a little over 50 colleges to enable some bench-

15 marking to take place while the student satisfaction survey data are collected by the college themselves. Naturally for this measure to be mainstreamed, more work on authenticity and proofing it against gaming will need to be done. The measure will also need to be proofed in line with audit requirements regarding clarity and accuracy for public funding expenditure.

AQ6

AQ7

The outcome of the experiment shows that the intangible social value addition for a small FE college with an annual budget of approximately £12 m are £24 m deduced from the employer views, £31 m deduced from the student view and £31 m deduced from the staff view.

AQ8

This pilot demonstrates how SE Ratio may be applied to an FE college using readily available data, how these results may be replicated for any college and how SE Ratio can enable a direct comparison between the intangible impact of FE colleges and/or private sector entities. A small general FE college, ca 12 m annual budget delivers to the community and tax payers an intangible value addition of nearly £30 m per annum.

Conclusions and recommendations

A mission for FE needed to create a Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector that is targeted to develop a shared FE culture, close skills shortages and skills gaps in education, enhance community cohesion and improve productivity needs to have a robust measure of impact. One possibility is to explore a non-financial and intangible value metric where social value is aligned to the sector mission. A robust measure will enable key stakeholders to agree on areas of focus in a specific geography or a specific time.

We therefore believe that there is a need to start national discourse on the mission and the inappropriateness of the current set of measures. There is also a need to publish benchmarks based on the proposed set of views in this study to help demonstrate the power of SE Ratio and to target skills gaps and shortages. It would be useful to demonstrate the effectiveness of SE Ratio by targeting the skills gap in a certain region, in a pilot piece of work targeting one industry sector, e.g. construction. This would be a detailed and involved piece of work but not conceptually difficult. We have already secured agreement that the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) devolution deal to Government later in the year will include an 'ask' to give freedom to SEMLEP to pilot this work over the next five years. This might include exploring the potentially significant link between social value and productivity. It might also involve a discussion on the relevance of Ofsted in FE, and any potential future role. The shift to a new set of metrics will involve colleges focusing on important measurements. So, if the agreed measure is of social value (SV), that will be the focus, and hence, the implications for them are: a realignment of college strategy and curriculum offer/delivery to SV. In addition, there would need to be a realignment of staff recruitment/appraisal and development, and finally a realignment of capital investment to SV. Such realignments will enable FE to become the strong owner of its mission and vision in the future, and allow it to develop its own culture and expertise, like the learners it serves, to the maximum of its potential.

Notes

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fe-choices-employer-satisfaction-survey-2015-to-2016>
2. Following the resignation of Rt Hon David Cameron MP and the appointment of Rt Hon Theresa May MP in 2016.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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